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**MOBILIZATION AND PARTICIPATION IN TRANSYLVANIA DURING
THE FIRST WORLD WAR: SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC
PERSPECTIVES**

ABSTRACT OF THE Ph.D. THESIS

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The First World War is one of the most important events of the 20th century, an event that left its mark on the population from almost all over the world. It is a subject that has been treated in a lot of books and articles, of which the most have addressed only the political-military aspects. The number of works written in this field is so big that the actual physical time does not allow their integral perusal. It was not until the second half of the 20th century that interest in the other elements that were a part of the lives of the people who experienced the harsh realities of war emerged. The war's demographic impact began to be studied, but the whole existing material in this respect has not been exhausted yet. Unfortunately, not all the historiographies have considered demography to be a subject worthy of being addressed and many of them have continued to ignore this aspect, giving priority to the study of other subjects. Romania inscribes itself on this list, but unlike the states that still maintain this attitude, some historians have begun to also consider the demographic, socio-economic, cultural aspects and so on, from this perspective, the Romanian historiography being only at the beginning of its path.

This event has also been one of the most important moments in the history of the Romanian people, a subject on which very much has been written. Nevertheless, the research tendencies have been predominantly oriented towards the political or military realm and, unfortunately, too little towards demography and day-to-day life, the economic, social, cultural aspects being somewhat ignored. I believe I could say that the important role of the civilians in enduring the war was not addressed accordingly as, without the material and moral assistance of the people left at home, the army could not have fulfilled its role on the battlefield. The lack of some thorough studies addressing this research level is one of the reasons for which I will sketch a general picture of the life that people left at home had to endure. My study is limited to a more restricted area, Transylvania, as a distinct district of the Double Monarchy, but I shall exemplify some aspects with cases and attitudes mainly from the Romanian side, which, as is well-known, formed the majority of the population here.

Concerning the war's impact on the Principality, there is some information, most of it being of political or military nature, with very little concerning the socio-cultural and mental aspects of the civilian population- the latter can be found chiefly in memoirs, journals, newspapers or in the letters exchanged between the people fighting on the battlefields and their loved ones, letters in which the care towards their families and the concern for their own persons is reflected, the majority of such documents being optimistic and expressing the hopes of a quick reunion, by using almost identical phrasing and content, as if they had been standardized, while the families left at home would describe not only their state of health and

longing for the person being far away, but also the situation within the household, the relationship with the other family members and some information on the recruiting process back „home”.

Researching the general studies, the syntheses, has the aim of acting as a guideline for the subject, thus yielding a general perspective on the matter. In order to complete a study as comprehensive as possible, the majority of it will be based on specialized materials, both published and unpublished.

First, the fact that there are quite a lot of studies pertaining to the universal, specialized literature that have dealt with the analysis of the main subject of the present study must be mentioned; however, we must add that, although covering the period and the territorial region, they refer but very little to Transylvania. At most, it is mentioned as a part of Austria-Hungary and mentions are made solely of Hungary. I shall also give some examples in this respect: in his work, *The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918*, released in 2001, Alan Sked speaks about Austria, Hungary, Dualism, problems concerning Nationalism, but as for Transylvania during the First World War he gives no details, mostly mentioning this region in its pre-1848 context. Another study, released before the one just mentioned, is the one of C. A. Macartney, *The Habsburg Empire 1790-1918*, issued in 1988, addressing the same problem as Sked and similarly not offering any details on Transylvania.

A more recent publication, issued in 2011, *The Encyclopedia of migration and Minorities in Europe. From the 17th century to the Present*, with Klaus J. Bade, Leo Lucassen, Pieter C. Emmer and Jochen Oltmer as its coordinators, just as in the previously mentioned cases, speaks about Transylvania only as a piece of Hungary, although it does mention some details, be they from before 1848.

Neither does István Deák's study- *Beyond Nationalism. A Social and Political History of the Habsburg Officer Corps, 1848-1918*, issued in 1990, offer details on Transylvania for the period this present study focuses on. It mentions little about Romania, and as for the Romanians from Transylvania, they are hardly referenced.

Then there are the works dealing with the moment of the Romanian state entering Transylvania, but they discuss only military, political and diplomatic aspects. An example in this respect could be the work of Gerhard P. Groß, *Ein Nebenkriegsschauplatz. Die deutschen Operationen gegen Rumänien, 1916* issued within the volume **Der Erste Weltkrieg auf dem Balkan. Perspektiven der Forschung**, coordinated by Jürgen Angelow, Gundula Gahlen and Oliver Stein and published in 2011; but also the work of Julia

Windischbauer, *Die Republik Rumänien und ihre historisches Region Sibenburgien*, likewise released in 2011.

The information used in the making of this study is that obtained from the notes of some direct participants in this war, for example major G. G. Garoescu, of the 6th Hunters Regiment, who depicts very well in his notes the state of mind in Făgăraș at the moment of the Romanian army's withdrawal. Another source for the data used by this study are the official figures registered by the Hungarian authorities in *Magyar Statisztikai Közlemenyek Új Sorozat* (Statistic Hungarian Publications 'New Series'), offering demographic figures both for every county separately, and for the entirety of Transylvania. From this publication I shall use the statistic data for the three demographic phenomena analysed in the present study: the birth, death and marriage rates.

Aside from these, we also have a brief study of Teodor V. Păcățian, *The Sacrifices of the Romanians of Banat, Crișana, Sătmar and Maramurăș, made during the World War: from 1914-1918*, issued by the publishing house „Asociațiunii” of Sibiu in 1923; this publication was a result of an initiative belonging to the ‘ASTRA’ cultural association, starting with the year 1922, and based on a survey addressed to all the city halls of Transylvania, with the aim of statistically centralizing the data concerning the human and material sacrifices of the Romanian people between the Carpathians. This study provides a panoramic image of the Transylvanian Romanians' participation in the First World War, offering information concerning their number, the number of those who died on the battlefield as a result of either their wounds or the diseases they had suffered from, the number of the crippled, of the soldiers pronounced missing, but also of those who managed to return home healthy (physically speaking), as well as the number of orphans and widows of those who had died on the battlefield. This information has been useful in sketching a general image of the sacrifices made by the Transylvanians for a cause that was not their own, although the information is not complete, as it is mentioned by the author himself¹.

These are not the only information sources used; to be able to better comprehend the situation I have also used some of the journals issued during the war, that have managed to capture, to a certain extent, the spirit of those times, though we should certainly also take into consideration the censorship dominating the Transylvanian press and limiting its „freedom of expression”. Among the journals that have been used here, the most important are *Unirea (The Unity)*, *Cultura Creștină (The Christian Culture)* -both issued in Blaj-, *Telegraful*

¹ Teodor V. Păcățian, *Jertfele românilor din Bănat, Crișana, Sătmar și Maramurăș, aduse în războiul mondial: din anii 1914-1918*, Ed. „Asociațiunii”, Sibiu, 1923, p. 20.

Român (The Romanian Telegraph) and *Transylvania*, both of them issued in Sibiu, and last, but not least, *Pagini Literare (Literary Pages)* issued in Arad, and these are not the only ones.

An important contribution to this study was brought by a few archive funds- for instance, the *Collection of Letters from World War I* Fund, which is in the possession of the Cluj County Directorate of the National Archives. This fund contains both letters sent from home to those on the battlefield, and letters sent by soldiers to their loved ones: parents, wives, children etc. The abovementioned County Directorate also stores the *Iacob Popa* Fund- the owner of the documents belonging to this fund was the vicar of Făgăraș, a position which naturally gave him the opportunity of leaving behind in his notes a realistic picture of the situation in this particular territory, until the moment of the Romanian army's withdrawal from Transylvania, when he himself found refuge in Romania. Of significant importance to this present study were also the *Rudolf Kiszling* Fund which is in the possession of the Vienna Military Archives, and the *Greek-Catholic Metropolitan Church of Blaj* Fund, found at the Alba-Iulia County Directorate of the National Archives, and providing some statistical data related to the number of those deceased or missing in every small rural district pertaining to the county of Făgăraș, although unfortunately, the information is incomplete. I believe I can disclose the fact that these funds represented yet another reason for my deciding to research this particular subject, as a significant portion of the information found in the abovementioned documents has not been capitalised on, a situation that I shall endeavour to change.

The structure of my thesis is comprised of 8 chapters, an argument, conclusion and its respective bibliography. The first chapter, entitled *World War I and Transylvania: General Aspects* and split into 2 subchapters, namely *The Province* and *The Transylvanian War Participants*, discusses Transylvania and its status within the Austria-Hungarian Empire. The second chapter, *Demotic Reactions to the War*, likewise divided into 2 subchapters- *Attitude to War and the Relation between Society and the Authorities* and *The War reflected in the Songs and Popular Poems of Transylvania*, underlines the way in which the Transylvanian people reacted to the war, both the bibliography used and the Transylvanian folkloric evidence found indicating the change in people's attitude as time went by and after Romania entered the war.

The third chapter, *The War's Demographic Impact*, with its subchapters *The Relation between Birth and Marriage Rates* and *The Death Rate*, analyses the way in which World War I affected the Transylvanian populace, from a statistical perspective. The next

chapter, entitled *Economic Aspects* and split into its 3 parts- *The Development of Agriculture and Industry in Transylvania*, *The Price Control on Food* and *Romanian Banks in Transylvania*, examines the effects on the Transylvanian agriculture and industry, how the public food supply was affected (both as far as prices were concerned, and due to the increasingly severe requisitions as the war continued) and, last but not least, certain aspects pertaining to the financial and banking system of this area are analysed.

The chapter given the title *Social Aspects: „The Internal Front”* is also divided into 3 subchapters- *Women and Family*, *Children and Family Life* and *Charitable Activities* investigates the consequences of the war on the lives of those left at home, especially women and children, both individually and as members of a family. In addition, the chapter focuses on the type of involvement displayed by the authorities, the banks, the people etc., on the charitable acts carried out by them.

Another tripartite [*Mobilization, Propaganda and Censorship*] chapter is the sixth- *Measures Taken under Military Control*, which spotlights the way in which the authorities were involved in the lives of those left at home, their means of controlling the civilian population. The following chapter, *Romanian Teaching in Transylvania*, examines how the Transylvanian educational system was influenced by the recruiting of not only members of the teaching staff, but of some of the older students and pupils, as well.

The final chapter, *The End of WWI and its Consequences*, paints a partial picture of the consequences of the First World War on the population of Transylvania.

This present study has endeavoured –successfully, in my opinion- to depict the manner in which the life of the Transylvanian civilian population, in all its aspects, was affected by the way the war unfolded, as well as by Romania’s joining the effort alongside the forces of the Entente. As with any other military conflict, this one also influenced the lives of those behind the frontlines, both from a qualitative and a quantitative perspective. As this thesis demonstrates, the population suffered a great deal from the ‘persecutions’, that is, the measures taken by the Hungarian authorities to which that so-called ‘time of crisis’ was sufficient justification. For instance, some of these measures included those that facilitated the arrest of the Transylvanian Romanians who were suspected of espionage or of collaborating with the ‘adversary’, meaning the Romanians from across the Carpathians. Aside from these measures, they also suffered the most from the requisitions and recruitments. As shown in the previous chapters, once Romania entered the war, the situation only worsened.

Just as I had hoped since beginning this study, I came to the conclusion that even though Transylvania joined the war effort since day 1 and thus had to endure the consequences of a lengthy military conflict, the life of the Transylvanian population was affected by not just its own decisions.

Romania's attitude towards the war also played an important part, as it affected the Hungarian policy towards the Romanian population of Transylvania. The fact that Romania decided to cease its state of neutrality in favour of declaring war on Austria-Hungary had the side effect of worsening the situation of the Transylvanian Romanians. Fearing a potential alliance between Transylvania and Romania, the Hungarians intensified the measures of Magyarization and of controlling the population by issuing threats to their lives and freedom. In spite of this, the Hungarian policy was a failure, as significant numbers of Transylvanian Romanians crossed the Carpathians to Romania or surrendered to the opposing army only to enlist as volunteers alongside their brothers from across the mountains later on.

These are but a few of the aspects to have influenced the development of the Transylvanian population both during the war and after its conclusion. The First World War had a huge impact on Transylvania since its very beginning, one that did not cease its existence even after the peace treaties were signed. The war left no facet of the life in this region untouched. It was obviously not an event to content itself with the military aspect and the material damage, but one that, as this study proves, affected the civilian part of society as well, in every possible way- from public food supply, to education, mentality, standard of living etc., everything changed with the passing of time and the prolongation of the war.